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ABSTRACT

In response to a deficiency in basic skills demonstrated by students admitted to Santa Fe Community College (SFCC), a Vocational Skills Assessment (VSA) program was developed to increase student awareness of personal and vocational strengths through hands-on assessment of their abilities. The VSA program has four integrated courses: (1) Skills Assessment and Career Choice, which focuses on matching students' abilities with vocational-technical certificate programs or available jobs; (2) Applied Living Skills, which helps students relate social and personal needs with vocational and academic strengths; (3) Basic Skills, which gives students the opportunity to upgrade academic skills; and (4) Presentations by Employers and Community Leaders, which provides information on employment trends and possibilities. An integral component of the VSA program is work sampling offered by the college's Work Exploration Center, where students can gain hands-on experience by utilizing the tools or activities required on the job. The hands-on activities include the Adkins Employability Module of Columbia University and other "how to get a job" activities; the Santa Fe Career Development Center's self-paced activities in career decision making; and a performance-based approach to career choice. A diagram of the VSA program is appended. (HB)

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KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN - A HANDS-ON APPROACH

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UC 830 446

KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN - A HANDS-ON APPROACH

by
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In record numbers students continue to apply to community colleges as they hope to acquire the skills they will need to be competitive in the job market of the 1980's.

This expressed desire for specific job related skills and the emphasis on quality education must be compatible within a community college setting. Many high school graduates who applied and were admitted to Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) in Gainesville, Florida, demonstrated a difficiency in the skills necessary for successful completion of the degrees that they sought. After two years of marginal performance, many were not prepared to transfer to a four-year institution, nor did they possess marketable job skills. These disillusioned graduates, as well as students who dropped out en route, or those who failed, represented a waste of student talent and college resources.

The Office of Student Development at Santa Fe Community College recognized that although these students were ill-prepared for academic work, many had the potential to get and keep good jobs. A Vocational Skills Assessment program, VSA, was developed at SFCC to meet the needs of these students who were identified by their scores on the American College Test (ACT). The VSA program is designed to increase student awareness of personal and vocational strengths through hands-on assessment of their abilities. Students have the opportunity to redefine

their vocational goals as they are introduced to available vocational-technical certificate programs and an array of jobs not requiring an academic degree.

Students earn institutional credits and thus are eligible for financial aid. However, these credits are not counted toward meeting required or elective credits necessary for transferring or an AA degree. Students electing the VSA program also attend classes taught by Santa Fe staff. These instructors counsel with students on a one-to-one basis throughout their course of study.

The VSA program has four integrated courses:

Skills Assessment and Career Choice - focuses on matching students' abilities with vocational-technical certificate programs or available jobs.

Applied Living Skills - helps students interrelate social and personal needs with vocational and academic strengths and weaknesses.

Basic Skills - gives students the opportunity to upgrade academic skills that relate specifically to realistic vocational goals.

Presentations by Employers and Community Leaders - provide updated information on entry-level work available in the local job market and employment trends.

An integral component of the VSA program is work sampling offered by the college's Work Exploration Center. With the assistance of work-evaluator/counselors, students have the opportunity for 14 hours of hands-on experience with work samples which closely approximate jobs by utilizing the tools or activities required on the job. All work samples have norms which

allow students to compare their quality and quantity ratings with those of entry-level workers. Work samples act as a yardstick against which students line up their unique skills. Each student is encouraged to take risks and try out previously untried skill areas such as those in non-traditional careers. The diversity of work samples allows every student success in some career area and seeing these concrete tasks through to completion helps students build self-confidence and needed self esteem.

Hands-on activities are also included in the other components of the Skills Assessment and Career Choice curriculum. These include:

--The Adkins Employability Skills Modules of Columbia University, New York City, and other "how to get a job" activities.

--The Santa Fe Career Development Center which provides self-paced activities in career decision-making including two computerized vocational search systems, SIGI (System of Interactive Guidance and Information) and CHOICES.

--Nathan Azrin's performance-based approach to career search. This approach is designed to provide students with positive reinforcement for all behaviors exhibited toward securing employment (completing applications, rehearsing statements to employers which describe skills and experiences, and arranging personal interviews). This model has demonstrated its ability to help unemployed persons develop independent job search skills using a group approach.

The hands-on experiential nature of all components of the Vocational Assessment program allows students to participate in skills assessment and training in an objective arena which emphasizes performance strengths.

The Vocational Skills Assessment program demonstrates the versatility of community college programming by keeping doors open

in an era of high standards. All students are provided with opportunities to assess their skills, receive career guidance, and enter training programs which qualify them for a successful work life.

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SFCC's Alternative Avenue to Success

Students + Community College = Skills Assessment & Training!
Students + Skills = Jobs!

VOCATIONAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

A one-semester program of directed guidance for students whose scores on standardized testing* indicate that they are not prepared for academic work but have the potential to get and keep good jobs. Resources are available through the Office of Student Development to assist students in:

- assessing abilities
- introducing jobs not requiring formal academic preparation
- redefining vocational objectives

SKILLS ASSESSMENTS AND CAREER CHOICE

Work Exploration Center:
- -Work samples (hands-on experiences with actual job tasks)
- -Employability skills assessment & training
- -Career search assistance (locating, securing, maintaining a job)

Career Development Center:
- -Career decision making systems: SIGI, CHOICES
- -Career information including the Florida VIEW System

APPLIED LIVING SKILLS

- -Interpersonal communications skills
- -Personal goal setting
- -Values clarification
- -Conflict resolution

BASIC SKILLS

- -Math
- -Reading
- -Writing

EMPLOYER PRESENTATIONS

- -Current job market information
- -Updated employment trends

INFORMED VOCATIONAL CHOICE

Vocational-Technical Programs
Certificate Programs

Entry level jobs
(not requiring academic preparation)

*As assessed by American College Test (ACT).

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